

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Residents voice concerns on growth projections

By DEBORA BABIN KATZ
For The Patriot Ledger

DUXBURY

DUXBURY — Residents and town officials packed the town hall meeting room Monday night to express concerns over the latest draft of the town's revised master plan.

Several took issue with town consultants' projections of development and population.

"The purpose of the document is to help the town control growth and development by outlining planning goals and policies," planning board member William Zachmann said. But Zachmann said, so far, the draft represents only the proposed recommendations of the consultants.

He said the board would be meeting over the next month to refine the plan and would consider the views of

residents and other town officials. It hopes to have a final document completed by mid-June.

John Brown Associates, a Cambridge consulting firm, recently submitted its preliminary version of the final draft to the planning board. The firm was hired by the board in 1997 after \$50,000 was appropriated at town meeting to update the previous master plan, completed in 1973.

The new master plan includes sections on land use, the town's economic base, natural and cultural resources, housing, public facilities and services, transportation and an implementation plan.

The plan projects that the number of dwellings would increase from the current 5,737 to 10,082

units, assuming the current zoning laws and regulations remain in effect. It estimates that population would grow from 1998's 14,880 to 26,877, an 80 percent increase.

But residents, developers and members of town committees questioned the construction and population projections, citing what they consider to be errors, lack of data collection, lack of fiscal analysis, and the need for certain historical trend analysis.

Residents were concerned about how new construction would affect town services, open space and the beach. Developer Shawn Dahlen and resident Sara Wilson questioned the accuracy and method used to calculate the analysis.

"I think the population projection is greatly inflated," said Wilson, adding that the calculation includes a large

tract of town-owned land and land on Round Pond owned by the Duxbury Rural & Historical Society. "You need to double check town and charitable land owned for protection."

Zachmann said that "if factual corrections need to be made, we will make them," adding that the planning board "will take as long as needed to get plan data current."

The finance committee and Selectman Andre Martecchini raised concerns over the lack of financial analysis.

"There needs to be some kind of economic analysis on certain issues," such as the cost benefit of purchasing open space, Martecchini said.

School officials and parents expressed their concerns over the lack of accurate student population data. School committee member Betsy

Sullivan asked when those figures will be available.

"The feedback we (school committee members) are getting from concerned groups is over class size in our schools," she said.

Parents said the plan should have reliable student population estimates. Accurate information would help the school committee plan for student increases and the subsequent demand for additional classroom space, Kathy Bittrick said.

Concerns also were voiced that the master plan analysis on development and population growth does not take into account "the newest variable, the train to Boston."

Resident Bridget O'Keefe said the new Old Colony commuter rail service will influence people considering moving to Duxbury.